The Top Runners' Quarterly

Newsletter of The Top Runners' Conference, The Official **Netrunner**® Players' Organization
Volume 3, Issue 1 First Quarter, 1999
www.cyberjunkie.com/trc

Preparations for World Domination 1999 Qualifiers Continuing Apace

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This is the World Domination Committee speaking (Josh Berling, Chicago, USA; Paulo de Tarso, Floripa, Brazil; Lukas Kautzsch, Karlsruhe, Germany (chair)). After a lively discussion on the Netrunner-L mailing list, we are happy to announce some details of this year's **Netrunner** World Championship, World Domination 1999 (WD) including the World Domination Qualifiers (WDQ).

WDQ will consist of many meatspace tournaments all over the world, between March 12 and April 11, 1999. Everyone who would like to organize such an event is encouraged to do so (please contact the WD Committee as soon as possible). For players who cannot attend a meatspace WDQ event there might be the option of a WDQ event on IRC (Internet Relay Chat)–please contact the WD Committee if you are interested in playing WDQ that way.

The top quarter of players from each WDQ tournament will qualify for Round One of WD, as well as the top three finishers from last year's WD and the top three players each from the 1998 UK, French and German Nationals, the 1998 Northwest US Regionals and the 1999 Brazil Nationals. (These prequalified players may not play in WDQ.)

There will be a total of eight tournaments in WD Round One (probably six to seven in meatspace, one or two on IRC) with times and places to be determined after the WDQ attendance numbers are known. (Time frame: June or early in July; tentative geographical distribution of meatspace events: three each in North America and Europe.) Only the winner (or runner-up, if necessary) from each WD Round One tournament will advance to the WD Finals. The WD '99 Finals will take place on IRC, in late July or August.

The basic format for all WDQ/WD events will be Sealed Deck: one starter, one regular and one *Proteus*™ booster. The Finals will include an additional Unlimited Constructed tournament. It's still an open question whether WD Round One will be featuring one as well. All tournaments will use scoring by GMP and Swiss pairing.

The official rules for WD '99 as well as a list of all registered tournaments and results can be found at the WD '99 homepage:

http://www.system.ptv.de/~lukas

State of the Corp—March 1999

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
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As I write this, I still have no details on the release of the new cards. I know that they are on the schedule, and a business proposal is being presented shortly, but I still haven't any information on a release date or on the method of distribution. I do expect to have those answers shortly.

In my discussions with the DCI I have learned that there should be a simple rating system up and running by the end of this quarter. That, along with the numerous sanctioned tournaments to be held during WDQ '99, can only help increase the legitimacy of **Netrunner** on the tournament scene.

This summer looks to be exciting, with not only the World Domination event but several high-profile National tournaments planned. This year will see the first US **Netrunner** Nationals, which we hope to put on at Origins.

In local news, one of the Wizards of the Coast stores in this area is very interested in putting on more **Netrunner** events. That's where I'll be holding the Seattle-area WDQ tournament. With any luck, I'll be able to take some time off and let them do the work running tournaments this year!

Good luck to all the competitors in this year's WDQ. May the information be free!

Did You Know?

Bits and Pieces from the NR Trivia Collection

#2: Short-Term Contract

by Jens Kreutzer
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A staple bit-gainer card for the Runner, Short-Term Contract is especially liked in **Netrunner** Sealed-Deck play, coming a close second to cards like Newsgroup Filter and Broker. The "mouse-slinging," temporary Runner employee is humorously portrayed in the artwork by James A. Higgins. In the flavor text, we find a reference to the roleplaying game **Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.** by R. Talsorian Games, which features the character Spider Murphy in some of its supplements. She is a hacking companion of the notorious Rache Bartmoss in the **CP2020** background story.

What's somewhat mysterious about the card artwork is the Japanese writing in the background, however, which also contains the English letters "JM" and "SF," and the number "2021." The Japanese characters translate as the fragments "Keanu Reeves," "JM," "the year 2021..." and "three movie stars from the U.S. and Japan." These are references to the cyberpunk science fiction film *Johnny Mnemonic,* starring Ice-T, Keanu Reeves, and Takeshi, an actor quite famous in Japan. Another fragment of Japanese, beginning in parentheses, spells out "U-i-ri-a-mu" (William)—possibly a reference to cyberpunk author William Gibson, who wrote the script for this movie, which is based on his short story of the same name. The whole fragment of text might have been taken from the cover sleeve of the movie's soundtrack CD, which was manufactured in Japan.

“Elementary, My Dear Wilson!”
Famous Netrunner Stacks
#2: Precision Bribery/Time to Collect

by Jens Kreutzer (with contributions by Daniel “Beats” Schneider and Holger “The AI” Janssen)
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Chided as one of the most “broken” Runner stacks, **Precision Bribery/Time to Collect** (PB/TTC) is a staple to be found at most constructed **Netrunner** tourneys since the advent of ***Proteus***, conceived of by players like Nat Johnson and others. Because it tries to create a “lock” situation for the Corp, attempting to reach a point at which the Corp player cannot do much apart from taking bits and watching its R&D dwindle away, playing against PB/TTC can be very frustrating. For all the deserved criticism people have thrown at PB/TTC and the way it takes away the Corp player’s fun, this much can still be said: It is a strategy against the most powerful Corp ace-up-the-sleeve (namely fast-advancing operations) that really works. It has been suggested that the *Proteus* design team created the card Precision Bribery specifically to neutralize Psycho Tycho decks. But Runners beware: your opponents in a tourney might become grumpy if they see that they're up for another hackneyed ’Bribery game—many players consider it beneath their dignity to utilize this well-known, unoriginal strategy.

What can be called the “inner core” of each PB/TTC deck is the combination of three cards: Precision Bribery to stop the Corp dead in its tracks, preventing the installation of nodes or agendas in new subforts and therefore taking away the main avenue of a Corp victory; Time to Collect to make the Corp spend the 4 bits to get rid of PB not once, but multiple times; and finally, Junkyard BBS to recycle and reinstall the cards the Corp just trashed. It takes only simple arithmetic to calculate who will win this bit race: If the Runner has a PB, two TTCs and a Junkyard installed, all the Corp can do in its three actions is pay 12 bits to trash the PB/TTC combo. In the next turn, the runner pays 2 bits to Junkyard the PB and one TTC and reinstalls them. The Corp has made just one card headway for 12 bits. Can it afford another 8 bits to cram in the one card it wants to install next turn? Most of the time, it cannot; in any case, it's a 20-bits-versus-2-bits scenario we're looking at—you can figure out by yourself who will come out victorious about 90% of the time (at a guess).

It is because of this gross difference in the install–trash cost relationship that people have called either PB or TTC “broken.” But still, it is not all-powerful, since getting the combo into play in the first place isn’t that easy. An experienced Corp player who finds out that he or she is facing PB/TTC will create one or more subforts immediately; a Corp that has already created all the subforts it needs by the time PB hits the table can simply ignore the card. That is why almost all PB/TTC stacks contain some kind of an ice-destruction kit (and possibly node/upgrade destruction as well) to get rid of early subforts—if the Runner can destroy all but the central data forts, the Corp is on its knees. Part of this “outer core” of PB/TTC decks therefore are cards like Remote Detonator, Security Code WORM Chip, Death from Above, Inside Job, and maybe Core Command: Jettison Ice, though normally the Runner just runs HQ so that the subfort ice is never rezzed anyway.

If all goes well for the Runner, however, the Corp never gets time to adjust to a PB/TTC-using opponent. A normal opening for a typical Corp deck is one ice card each in front of both HQ and R&D and maybe a bit-gainer Operation like Accounts Receivable. With an Inside Job and WORM Chips at his or her disposal, the Runner can immediately begin to trash ice with impunity. Almost no Corp will put two ice cards in front of HQ on the first turn and be able to rez them both. That is why PB/TTC stacks are so dreaded.

Apart from these “inner” and “outer” cores of a PB/TTC stack, there are many variants. Some concentrate on the lock and use lots of PBs and TTCs, simply waiting until the Corp cannot draw any more cards and so loses. Others include another component to deliver the killing blow, often a virus-based strategy such as a Scaldan–Bad Publicity scheme. There are even PB/TTC stacks that use the combo solely as support material to strengthen another strategy altogether; in such stacks, the “core” will constitute less than 50% of the whole stack. Still another question is whether to include icebreakers at all, since an ice-destruction theme usually gets by without them just fine. And of course, the questions of card-draw engine, bit generation, and tag protection must also be addressed. Therefore, there is no single “ultimate” PB/TTC deck.

The following PB/TTC deck was played by Bernard-Pierre Panet in a Paris **Netrunner** tournament in April 1997 (and has been plagiarized ever since). It is a rather down-to-earth stack without any extra virus kits—it just tries to run the Corp out of cards. His bit-gaining engine is Organ Donor/Bodyweight™/MIT, and it includes an icebreaker as well as some tag protection to fall back on.

4	**Precision Bribery**
5	**Time to Collect**
3	**Junkyard BBS**
4	**Inside Job**
4	**Security Code WORM Chip**
1	**Remote Detonator**
1	**Death from Above**
1	**Shredder Uplink Protocol**
1	**Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker**
1	**Joan of Arc**
5	**Organ Donor**
7	**Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood**
2	**MIT West Tier**
2	**Militech MRAM Chip**
2	**Total Genetic Retrofit**
2	**Fall Guy**

So, what can you do against a PB/TTC stack? Not too much, really, apart from trying to trash any PBs and TTCs at all costs before a Junkyard BBS can recycle them. If all else fails, you must gather bits until you can afford the unfavorable 20-bits-versus-2-bits equation for several turns in succession. Bit-gainer Operations can help tremendously here. Since trashing takes one action whereas Junkyarding and reinstalling takes two, you can get ahead of the Runner eventually, even though he or she has one more action per turn than the Corp does. Also remember that trashing resources costs only two bits if the Runner is tagged. But then, you might just pack Chance Observation and Urban Renewal to bring the PB/TTC-Runner a deserved fate on turn two. Good luck!

Netrunner in the UK—The London City Grid

by Philip Harvey
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The story of the London City Grid starts with a small, loosely connected group of people, most of whom knew next to nothing about CCGs. We became aware of each other through our local comic shop, just before the **Star Wars** CCG was released. With all of us thinking how cool it would be to recreate *Star Wars* by playing cards with pictures from the film on them, we came together once a week for friendly fun. This was to be the beginning of bigger things.

Our involvement with **Star Wars** drew us gradually into the world of collectable card games and the elements within. Making new contacts with time, two of us learned of **Netrunner**, with a colleague informing us that *Inquest* scored it 6/6, the only game at that time to achieve this mark. Our curiosity was piqued when we were told that cards were played face down. We wondered how that could possibly work!

Having found this new game we were initially put off by the more-expensive starters, but Barry Coote and I couldn't resist the temptation and we snapped up a pair on a Friday afternoon. When we opened them up the cards looked—and smelled—great. The rulebook was a good size and was very well written. We spent the best part of the weekend playing our first games, impressed that the card selection within a starter was not a problem at all.

Excited by our discovery, we took **Netrunner** to the others in our group and started playing, showing it off. It took almost no encouragement to get them to buy it and, very shortly, everyone was enjoying the new game. It was not long after we started playing that those with email joined on to the Netrunner-L list and became more involved in the international **Netrunner** community. This allowed more strategy and a greater understanding of the game to come into the group.

The next defining moment for us came almost a year and a half later, in the autumn of '97. The chatter on the NR list about tournaments made me want to compete myself, but no one could do much about it due to a lack of knowledge and experience. Not letting petty details like this stop me, I took it upon myself to get something started. I arranged a sealed-deck tournament, enlisting the help of the ever-helpful Jennifer Clarke Wilkes for advice and prizes. Advertising and using some contacts gained through trading **Netrunner** cards, I was able to get a decent turnout. It was through this tournament that I first met Richard Clyne, DCI™ Judge and later-to-be-first UK Regional Director, Huw Morris and Ralph Grimble, now members of the Oxford City Grid.

Flush from running my first event, when I saw an advertisement for a card gaming convention, I contacted the organiser. I was told that he had no plans for a **Netrunner** tournament, but that I was welcome to run one myself. This not only coincided nicely with Gridlock II, it was a foot in the door. Huw and I each qualified for World Domination '98 but were both knocked out in the first round. (Even though I won both of my matches. Grrr.)

At Card Wars, the GWII venue, I met the organizer of PolyCon. At PolyCon I met the organizers of Games Fest. Between these two I was invited to the Dudley Bug Ball. The **Netrunner** tournament scene was gathering momentum. The higher-visibility tournaments attracted the attention of other gamers and brought to the surface the competitive streak in the regular players. Along with DCI sanctioning of the convention tournaments through Carl Crook of Wizards of the Coast UK, these factors combined to reinforce the notion that **Netrunner** was being taken seriously.

During this time the Cambridge City Grid, led by Simon Johnston, had come online and had started running their own events, held on campus. Enjoying the tournament scene, the London City Grid had participants in virtually every one of these, with Oxford occasionally joining the scene. On one occasion there was a better turnout for the **Netrunner** event than a **Magic: The Gathering**® tournament—Yay! Paul Grogan, a **Magic**® player who also organised regular, DCI-sanctioned tournaments, likewise turned his interest to **Netrunner**. Paul started running **Netrunner** tournaments alongside **Magic**, which have attracted some peripheral interest. Paul is now UK Regional Director and his tournaments and promotion of **Netrunner** have been wonderful contributions to the game in the UK.

In each tournament it was Mark Applin's proficiency at constructed-deck play that enabled him to finish highly, usually coming in first. This led to him ranking number one at constructed **Netrunner** in Matthias Nagy's world ranking list for many months. Mark is one of the best players I have come across and he continues to create great decks, not just for **Netrunner**. With the spread of information as fast as it is, it is hard to say precisely how innovative he has been, but he certainly manages to see things in some cards that most people miss.

In the late summer of '98 we were to be battling it out with little mercy, as the UK Championships at GEN CON® UK in Loughborough approached. Staying with Lee Walker's brother, we prepared for the competition the only way blokes can—drinking and playing **Groo** until the early hours of the morning! Surprisingly, we were all able to turn up at both of the weekend's tournaments. Despite our long friendships, with plenty at stake the atmosphere and games were very intense. The constructed event saw many a Corporate War scored with Artificial Security Directors, with Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker and Joan of Arc almost as prevalent. In the final outcome, Mark became the UK Constructed **Netrunner** Champion and I was the UK Sealed-Deck **Netrunner** Champion, also taking the overall UK **Netrunner** Championship.

Things have continued apace since then, with regular tournaments in each City Grid, but the sad truth is that casual play appears to be on the decline. As no new cards have been released for so long the same decks or themes emerge time and again. I have noticed that in the London City Grid, despite the usual enthusiasm to play in tournaments, **Netrunner** is not played as much as another game during our weekly meetings. There are opportunities coming up to recruit some more people into playing the game, but new weefles will probably not entice the more experienced Netrunners to play for fun. The good news about the release of new cards later this year will most certainly generate interest and I am sure **Netrunner** will become, once again, the best card game to play.